3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OII7 Muragin OII7

THE ART OF YIRRKALLA

During my stay at Yirrkalla a number of the *jiritja* aborigines of the *gumatj* 616
mata produced paintings and decorated objects dealing with the totemic ancestors 773*
and the mythology of Cape Arnhem and Port Bradshaw. They were: 532*

Port Bradshaw

Baijini men and women	Pl. 107A
Spirit men, *Mokoi*	Pl. 109E., F
Hawksbill turtle, *kouwaradji*	Pl. 108C
Queen fish, *tinimbu*	Pl. 110B
Devil-ray, *mulara*	Pl. 110B
Stingray, *kawangalkmiri*	Pl. 108C
Octopus, *mainda*	Pl. 108C
Trepang, *teripi*	Pl. 110B

Cape Arnhem

Man, *Borolo-borolo*, and his wives, *Mainbuno* and *Wurungil*	Pl. 110D
Spirit men, *Mokoi*	Pl. 111A
Hawksbill turtle, *kouwaradji*	Pl. 109A
Queen fish, *tinimbu*	Pl. 106C
Devil-ray, *mulara*	Pl. 109C, D
Stingray, *kawangalk-miri*	Pl. 106D
Octopus, *mainda*	Pl. 106C
Serpent, *bilumbira*	Pl. 112A, D
Crocodile, *barou*	Pl. 122A
Rock cod, *kouper*	Pl. 106B
Whales, *morokundja* and *welerria*	Pl. 106D
Dugong, *mevinjunga*	Pl. 109B

(a) PORT BRADSHAW

Mythical Human Beings

The Baijini

At Port Bradshaw there is a puzzling myth of a fair-skinned people who 773*
during early times went there in search of trepang. The aborigines assert that 773
the *Baijini* were not at Port Bradshaw during *bumun* (creation) times but were 777
there soon afterwards, long before the Malays started to visit the coasts of Arnhem Land. The aborigines are certain the *Baijini* were not Malays, their skin being much lighter in colour.[67] They brought their wives with them (the Malays did not) and always carried a long knife, probably a sword. The uprights of their houses were made of local timber but the walls were strips of bamboo which the *Baijini* brought in their boats. The roof was thatched with unidenti-

67. The aborigines likened the skin of the *Baijini* to that of the sun-burned members of our party.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OI17 Murngin OI17

*773 ●173 177

fed palm leaves.[68] The smoking pipes of the *Baijini*, also, were unlike those of the Malays,[69] but resembled those used by our own party. In fact, the aborigines used to call our pipes *Baijini* pipes.

The *Baijini* may have been an isolated group of fair-skinned people, perhaps early Dutch or Portuguese, whose habits and appearance especially attracted the attention of the aborigines. The fact that the *Baijini* are now part of the mythology, as shown in the bark paintings and mentioned by Berndt,[70] does not necessarily indicate great age. The aborigines' songs of the Malay prau at Bickerton Island,[71] the bark paintings from Oenpelli of the *Mimi* with a European pipe[72], prove how the mythical stories keep up to date.

The *Baijini* party, which, in one myth, consisted of two men, two women and their children, came from a country to the north, called Jumaina. They sailed into Port Bradshaw and anchored at the mouth of a creek flowing into the south side of the harbour. As soon as they had established camp, the *Baijini* started to collect, cook and dry the trepang. The men, whom at first the aborigines looked upon as dangerous, always carried a long knife, *badi*.

One day, however, two aborigines, who had sneaked through the mangroves to have a look at the boat and its occupants, saw several small *Baijini* boys gathering cockles on the beach. The men, intrigued with the light colour of the boys' skin, crept closer to get a better view, when the boys, catching sight of the aborigines, beckoned them across. The *Baijini* children, equally puzzled about the dark colour of the aboriginal men,[73] felt them all over, and asked many questions, but neither group could understand the other. The *Baijini* children then took the aborigines by the hand, led them to a patch of jungle, and, motioning them to sit down, ran to tell their parents what had happened. Two *Baijini* men returned with their sons, coaxed the aborigines to their boat and gave them food. Although at first the men did not like the taste of the *Baijini* food, they soon became used to it. Later they stayed with the *Baijini* and helped them to collect trepang, bringing their wives and relatives to assist in the work.

[648]

*773 *532

Seven bark paintings and two carved heads[74] depict the *Baijini*.

In Pl. 107A the four figures are the *Baijini* people at Port Bradshaw. Reading from the left their names are: *Tainitja*, *Ditjaru*, name forgotten, and *Gurumuluna*, whom the aborigines looked upon as the head man.[75] The men, *Tainitja* and *Gurumuluna*, are carrying large steel knives, one in either hand.

Plate 107B represents two *Baijini* men, the one on the right *Gurumuluna*, and the other unidentified. They are surrounded by *jiritja* cloud symbols, i.e. the triangular designs associated with the Cape Arnhem-Port Bradshaw area. The

68. Pl. 128A. 69. p. 880.
70. Berndt, R. and C. (1949), p. 219. 71. p. 98. 72. Pl. 49A.
73. This suggests that the *Baijini* came from a country where the inhabitants were not as dark skinned as the aborigines.
74. The carved heads are described in Part 5.
75. On a carved head, Pl. 140B, *Gurumuluna* has a distinguishing badge on his forehead as hat.

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

commenced perhaps some hundreds of years ago, when these travellers of the sea expanded their field to include the North Australian coast. They came in search of trade, of trepang (bêche de mer), tortoise-shell, pearl-shell, sandalwood and timber.

But even before this, so these Aborigines tell in the songs that record and preserve their traditions, the "Baijini" people visited their shores. These Baijini, or pre-Macassans, also came from the western islands beyond the Arafura and Timor Seas; and the Aborigines still sing today of the ships in which these people arrived, and the women who came with them; the stone dwellings they built on the Australian mainland; the cloth that they wove and dyed; the clothes they wore, and the way in which they speared fish and cultivated small gardens. They are said to have been paler than the Macassans, a golden brown or copper colour like certain flying foxes. The Baijini era is looked upon, now, as belonging to the far-distant past – a part, almost, of the Ancestral Dreaming period, when the great Spirit Beings walked the earth. In some stories the Baijini are said to have been contemporaries of the most important among the Ancestral Beings, the Djanggawul Brother and Sisters.

The Aborigines distinguish this period from what they regard as historic times, when the Indonesians came sailing to the coast in their praus. They arrived with the north-west monsoons in October or November, staying for at least six months of the year and returning home again with the south-east winds. Occasionally some of them remained behind with their ships all through the dry winter, to be on hand when the fleets arrived at the beginning of the wet season.[1]

We cannot be certain of the approximate period when this Indonesian contact commenced, but tentative calculations place it in the early sixteenth century. Numerous camp sites, archaeological remains, old graves and tamarind trees testify to a prolonged association. Some of the large Macassan settlements have left concrete evidence behind them. In the north-eastern corner, for instance, quantities of pottery fragments have been found on an island at the mouth of Port Bradshaw and along the adjacent mainland.

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

But it is in the realm of the great song cycles and the stories which survive that a colourful picture of Malayan and Macassan life on these shores is unfolded.

At various sites on the north-east and south-east coast of Arnhem Land, at Arnhem Bay, Melville Bay, Port Bradshaw, Trial Bay, Caledon Bay and Groote Eylandt, these Indonesians of different types (not all true Macassan or Malay traders) founded their settlements. They built their houses on stilts, roofed them with woven leaves and fibre of coconut palm and even furnished them in an elementary way. They kept fowls,[2] fastened by one leg to the posts of the huts. Nearby they erected large boilers, and racks for drying the trepang, and out in the bays their ships were lying at anchor or being repaired. Each main settlement was a hive of industry, with Macassans and Australian Aborigines employed as labourers for specified payments. There were bartering depôts. Local natives brought in pearls, tortoise-shell and other natural products that the Indonesians wanted, and were given in exchange East Indies currency, introduced foods such as rice and sweetmeats, or cloth, knives and tobacco. This trade was well established and its influences are still apparent today.[3]

The visitors not only brought goods from their own country. While they were settled on the mainland they manufactured pottery, knives, cloth and sails, and they kept written accounts of their transactions with the Aborigines and with their own employees. The effects of their sojourn are seen in some forms of the local material culture. They introduced the dug-out canoe, which has almost replaced the indigenous bark variety, and it was from them that the natives learned to use steel in making knives, spear blades and tomahawks.

But it seems to have been in their diversions and entertainments, or in their ceremonies, that the Indonesians exerted their greatest influence on Aboriginal life. Watching them, the Aborigines learnt to play cards,[4] and began to adapt their song rhythms to alien tunes and the sounds of foreign musical instruments. Their mortuary ceremonies came to be associated with the departure of the praus, and with Macassan burial rites.[5] The important secular ceremony of the carved *wuramu* figure, the

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

more inclined to be blatant about sexual associations, while the other, perhaps equally promiscuous, is less willing to acknowledge this fact in public.

Even before the memorable meeting of Captain Mathew Flinders with Pobassoo, on 17 February 1803,[11] in the "Malay Road" between the English Company Islands and the mainland near Cape Wilberforce, Dutch and Portuguese voyagers had visited the north coast of Australia,[12] but their contact with the Aborigines seems to have been only transitory and unimportant. Before this, too, there is reason to believe that these coastal people had some association with native groups of the Torres Strait Islands and southern New Guinea. This subject is treated in one of the long song cycles of eastern Arnhem Land – although in later years, when the Missions introduced Badu Islanders (from the Torres Straits), these indigenous songs proved receptive in some degree to new ideas concerning that area.[13]

Mathew Flinders was followed by other explorers and surveyors,[14] until in the last quarter of the nineteenth century European traders became increasingly familiar with the Arnhem Land coast. About this time the relations between Macassans and the Aborigines began to deteriorate, and a number of massacres of these Indonesian visitors[15] were reported. Intercourse between Aborigines and Europeans was far from amicable. Mass shootings took place, native women were abducted, and some white men were speared. There was an attempt to settle part of the "Arafura" country, between Milingimbi and Elcho Island; in 1885 Florida cattle station was established near Mount Delight, between the Woolen and Blyth rivers.[16]

When the Macassan visits to the north coast came to an end there was an influx of Japanese pearlers and traders, and a few Europeans began to concentrate on trepanging. These people employed on their boats Aborigines from Darwin, Bathurst and Melville Islands and Goulburn Islands, as well as natives from the Torres Strait Islands, so that the coastal Arnhem Landers came in contact with a variety of "racial" types. The Japanese, for example, did not remain for long on friendly terms with the local natives; there were occasional spearings and massacres,

[396] voyages in the open sea, the matter is different. These craft
501 are hollowed out of a single tree. They have no keels, but are quite smooth underneath, and today are built without outriggers (although these are said to have been used by the Macassars), and depend for their safety and stability as much on the skill employed in their manufacture as in
[435] the seamanship of their crews. These *lippa lippa* are unlike any other element of material culture and are valued greatly.
● 173 The natives say that in former times the Macassar voyagers
439 brought these craft to Arnhem Land each season in their
648 praus and that a prau carried as many as eight or ten *lippa*
501 *lippa*. When the time came for their departure, the Macassar men presented the canoes to the natives as part of their farewell payment, and this became a ceremonial occasion.

177 Before the coming of the Indonesian voyagers the natives
501 used only bark canoes,[29] called *bärtwän*, and swimming logs,
[396] and it was only after the introduction by the Macassars of the *lippa lippa*, together with iron tools for cutting it, that the Arnhem Land people began making wooden canoes for themselves. Much labour is involved in the cutting of a big canoe, and none of the tools formerly used by the natives of Arnhem Land would have been fitted for
[412] this work. Although they possessed stone axes and shell scrapers, they lacked such tools as the fine, strong, relatively efficient adzes made from shell such as were used by the sea-faring peoples of Cape York Peninsula. This fact, and the way in which the wooden canoe was introduced, as well as its association with the Macassar voyagers, has given the *lippa lippa* a special place in Arnhem Land culture. But

[314] [29] The bark used is that of *Eucalyptus tetrodonta*, one of the "stringybarks", which is much used in technology. In addition to the manufacture of canoes, it serves for the roofing of houses and for the manufacture of certain vessels used for carrying water, as well as in the preparation of food.

12: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1933 O117 Murngin O117

and custom, then it appears that all the people of the area indicated belong to the one tribe, which for the time being must remain nameless.[4]

The widely separated locations of the hordes of the same *mala* present a puzzling problem. Probably migration, at least in part, accounts for it. An example of this is found in the Daiorrorr horde of the Berrkali *mala*, which within the lifetime of its present members migrated from the south of Buckingham Bay to its present location on the Goyder River. Possibly some evidence of migration is also found in the legends of the people, including the hordes along the northern coast and the islands adjacent thereto. In these legends a very large proportion of the mythological ancestors whose exploits they relate are represented as having lived and laboured and instituted the customs of the people in the neighbourhood of Caledon and Blue Mud Bays. In some cases these ancestors are represented as starting in at that point and travelling right across the country in a north-westerly direction to the opposite coast. These same legends, with local variations, are apparently found throughout the whole area, and the social organization and the customs of the people are of the one type.

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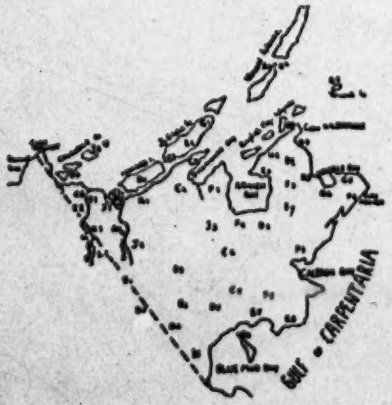

Map of North-East Arnhem Land showing approximate location of aboriginal hordes.

[4]The peoples to the west of the line indicated differ from those referred to in both language and social organization.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

CHAPTER FOUR

Men of the Stone Age

TANTALIZING mystery envelops Australia's Stone Age nomads, and the enigma of their history and Stone Age habits make them the most interesting of all primitive people. 173 ●

Legends in east Arnhem Land refer vaguely to mythical ancestors from 'over the sea' and 'beyond the dawn', whilst hordes in the west believe that their creator came from beyond the sunset. A precocious Yulengor explained that his people had not hitherto understood the kind of canoe used by the legendary ancestors, but, he said: 'Now we know they came in the Ark.'

Scanty evidence suggests that long before the days of the Pharaohs, Stone Age men paddled their canoes through the chain of islands linking Asia to Australia, probably carrying all they possessed in the way of dingoes, spears, stone axes, a smouldering fire-stick and bark bundles of food. In Arnhem Land they live still as Stone Age hunters. 174

In appearance, aborigines are well built, and slim. Contrary to popular belief they are not tall, though a casual glance over hordes here and there in east Arnhem Land might lead to this assumption. In actual fact the average height of aboriginal men is two inches less than the five feet eight inches of the average Englishman; aboriginal women average five feet one inch in height. 141

Long forearms and shins lend to the illusion of height. A man will sit with a foot drawn in and his knee bent upright [516]